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J. B. McFERRAN, JR., IN HIGHLAND COSTUME
By Charles Sneed Williams



MRS. CHARLES B. SMITH
Overmantel Decoration by Charles Sneed Williams

Race Tradition in Portrait Painting

By AGNES GERTRUDE RICHARDS

IN the surge of theories and wreck of ideals that has marked the development of ultra modernism it is good to see here and there a rock above the flood that still bespeaks the existence of solid ground underneath.

The exhibition of portraits by Charles Sneed Williams at the Michigan Avenue Galleries of Arthur Ackermann and Sons, served to remind us that beautiful construction, fine form and good drawing have not yet become obsolete. The keynote of his art is essentially British, reserved and refined, yet strong with the underlying prin-

ciples of right structure and solid technique.

Mr. Williams, though an American, is of English, Irish and Welsh extraction, and this, with his long residence in England and Scotland and his intensive study of the great era of English portraiture, have made him essentially English in his outlook upon life, manners and art.

Even though the English mind is more typically masculine than the French, he has found in the work of English artists more of refinement, sentiment and sensitiveness than is to be noted in the French. This he



*CHARLES, SON OF C. H. MORSE, JR.
By Charles Sneed Williams*

RACE TRADITION IN PORTRAIT PAINTING

attributes to the British love of home which is the basis of the character of our literature, culture and art.

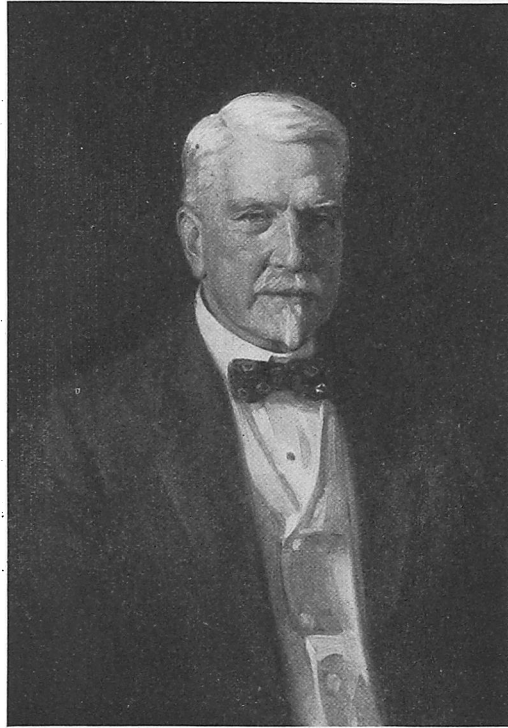
On the other hand, according to his observation British and American decoration are more vigorous than those of Gallic blood, in this connection contrasting the decoration of Brangwyn and Sargent with those of Besnard and Puvis De Chavannes.

Mr. Williams indeed is as fascinating in his observations on the part of the past and the present as he is in his actual works. He is keenly appreciative of his cotemporaries, especially of Sargent, Tarbell, Cecilia Beaux, Lavery and Sir James Guthrie whom he regards as notable in art history for good drawing and fine color.

The basic principle of his own art, however, is that the drawings in a portrait must be tremendously satisfactory or a fundamental is missing. He has studied and adored, beyond any paintings, the drawings of Holbein, the portrait sketches of Gainsborough and fallen captive to the brush drawing of Raeburn. For the latter artist indeed he holds so high a regard as to wish that some of his best works might be exhibited in America for the tremendous influence they would have upon art.

In all this we see Mr. Williams as a painter of sincerely high principles who places excellence above novelty and seeks to create a true work of art rather than a sensation. So we are not surprised to note in his portraits the qualities that he has admired in the great art of the ages. Here is realism and love of form, sincerity, character, good drawing and good color and, above all, the point of view of the aristocrat.

Nor is this last quality, though a subtle one, the least important in the makeup of a portrait painter. Portraits in all ages have ever been of the aristocracy. The man who essays to paint them must therefore be of the cultured classes by instinct and training, to be in sympathy and accord with the life he seeks to portray.



COLONEL CHARLES E. HOGE
By Charles Sneed Williams

The man of strictly Bohemian sentiments may better paint types but the portrait artist must be to art what Thackeray and Galsworthy are to literature.

Mr. Williams has quite thoroughly appreciated the composite and complex style of representation essential to the delineation of the best people. His complexity is like that of Galsworthy however, in that it does not involve a sacrifice of strength. To sculpture and drawing he accords the possibilities of doing abstract things, realizing that with the introduction of color one must strive for a certain degree of realism unless one would be content to do pure decorations. His portraits therefore present a finished aspect quite apart from many modern works which, by their insistence on some one element and complete ignoring of others, often appear as mere studies, things which are to true pictures what piano scales

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PORTRAIT DRAWING
By Charles Sneed Williams

and exercises are to complete and finished compositions. However, where elimination or an exercise of the selective faculty are indicated by the nature of the thing in hand, Mr. Williams displays his knowledge of essentials to superb advantage. Such an instance is his decorative portrait arrangement of Mrs. Chas. B. Smith designed as an over-mantel inset. Here he has worked in something of the mural method and with a flat surface finish that does away with reflections. This is a wonderfully successful bit of decoration with the portrait qualities subordinated to the pictorial, a method not inconsistent with the ideas of the great English portrait school.

Mr. Williams indeed firmly believes that the ideal portrait should be a decoration painted for a certain position in a certain interior and cites instances mentioned in Gainsborough's private letter of works which he designed and executed with this end in view.

As might be expected, the portrait drawings and sketches of Charles Sneed Williams are things of delight and we are glad to reproduce one herewith. He finds the drawing and sketching of American women a particularly fascinating occupation eliminating some of the problems of the painter who sometimes finds their complexity almost too dazzling and overwhelming so that it is puzzling to know just what to paint as essential characteristics.

More restraint and repose would indeed render the modern American woman a much more paintable subject, for restraint, relaxation and poise are essential to the best art. This is one of the reasons why the successful business man often makes such a splendid portrait subject. For, despite his reputation for hustle and bustle, the great man of the business world is almost invariably superbly poised, permitting only so much of himself to be seen as he chooses to display. Thus he presents a comprehensible feat in painting.



MISS ELSIE McLENNAN
By Charles Sneed Williams

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MRS. ALEX J. A. ALEXANDER
By Charles Sneed Williams

Mr. Williams' portraits of men are characterized by an amazing realism and a certain unity, harmony and strength that renders them notable among the works of the modern school. He is the laureate of the best type of successful American and among his this year's portrait group is a young man in the gorgeous costume of the Highlands that is all the heart could desire in the way of picture and portrait.

This costume is, in itself, an inspiration to the painter. One recalls in this connection the enthusiastic reception which Chicago accorded the Kilties. It cannot be doubted that the appeal of a costume primitive in its wild color and ornament, heroic and romantic in the appeal of its traditions in part accounted for the magnetic thrill which swept the crowds along the curb to wild hand-clapping.

Mr. Williams loves Scotland and its people, traditions, customs and hereditary costume. He relates that a Highland ball is the gayest event, from a color standpoint, the men in their brilliant plaids, silver buckles and the like, eclipsing the white gownned ladies as do peacocks and lions their more discreetly habited mates.

The face of the young man in Mr. Williams' Highland portrait is a wonderfully close, accurate and complete bit of painting which, together with the good construction and rich color, render it a thing to be long treasured in family halls. That this artist also paints children with all the appeal of their youthful softness and spontaneity may be gathered from the examples of his children's portrait herewith presented. He delights in this branch of his art, finding it a complete change and relaxation from other forms of portraiture and treating his little subjects in a simpler, less restrained manner.



T. PHILIP SWIFT
By Charles Sneed Williams